

## Fact sheet for caregivers: Youth medications for opioid use disorder

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- Overdoses involving fentanyl in Washington State [increased dramatically in recent years](#)<sup>1</sup> for people across the age continuum including teens and young adults.
- Fentanyl is a high-potency synthetic opioid. Illicitly manufactured fentanyl has infiltrated the drug supply, particularly in fake pills and powders.
- Fentanyl is causing large increases in opioid overdoses, hospitalizations, and deaths.
- Fentanyl use leads to a faster onset of opioid use disorder compared to heroin or pharmaceutical opioids and more OUD among youth.
- All 3 Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) are available to youth – Methadone, Buprenorphine, and Naltrexone – and are reimbursed by Washington Medicaid with no prior authorizations.
- Methadone and buprenorphine products [reduce overdose risk by 50% or more](#)<sup>2</sup> and support recovery.
- Naloxone (brand name Narcan) is a life-saving medication that can help reverse an overdose from opioids. Sometimes several doses are needed due to the high potency of fentanyl.
  - Naloxone is an extremely safe medication with [no case reports of allergic reaction](#).<sup>3</sup>
- [Potential bystanders are present](#)<sup>4</sup> in 2/3 of overdose deaths among adolescents.
- There is no pre-determined time frame for an individual to continue the use of MOUDs. As with other medications, they should continue use as long as it provides more benefit than harm. It is important to keep individuals on the treatment of their choosing to [support their recovery](#).<sup>5</sup>
- Inpatient residential treatment or withdrawal management/detoxification are sometimes thought of as the default treatment option. However, these one-time intensive interventions cannot cure an opioid use disorder and may increase the risk of overdose. OUD cannot be cured, it can be managed and
  - Medications are the standard of care for youth with opioid use disorder.
  - [The evidence for inpatient treatment for OUD without the use of medication is poor](#).<sup>6</sup>
  - Counseling and other supports can be critical for recovery but should not be preconditions for medications.
  - Youth taking MOUD are more likely to start and remain engaged in counseling and social supports treatment.

- Medications for the treatment of substance use disorders, including OUD, do not substitute one addiction for another. [Instead, when medications are used](#),<sup>7</sup> it balances the brain chemistry and allows an individual to work on their recovery. A person can be on medications and be in recovery.
  - MOUD addresses the physical component of addiction by getting them off the rollercoaster of opioid highs and lows and allows people to focus on the psychological and social components of use disorder.

## Resources

- [Washington Recovery Helpline](#) 1-866-789-1511
- [Friends for Life](#)
- [StopOverdose.org](#)
- Book: Beyond Addiction: How Science and Kindness Help People Change (2014) by Jeffrey Foote, PhD, Carrie Wilkens, PhD, and Nicole Kosanke, PhD, with Stephanie Higgs
- [Center for Motivation and Change](#)

## Contact

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## Links

1. **CMS Drug Overdose Deaths:** [cdc.gov/drugoverdose/deaths](https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/deaths)
2. **Johns Hopkins Barriers to Methadone Access:** [publichealth.jhu.edu/2023/barriers-to-methadone-access](https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2023/barriers-to-methadone-access)
3. **AAAAI Naloxone Hypersensitivity:** [aaaai.org/allergist-resources/ask-the-expert/answers/old-ask-the-experts/naloxone](https://aaaai.org/allergist-resources/ask-the-expert/answers/old-ask-the-experts/naloxone)
4. **CDC Drug Overdose Deaths:** [cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7150a2.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7150a2.htm)
5. **ADAI Understanding and Supporting Adolescents with an Opioid Use Disorder:** [adai.uw.edu/pubs/pdf/2021AdolescentsOUD.pdf](https://adai.uw.edu/pubs/pdf/2021AdolescentsOUD.pdf)
6. **JAMA Network Receipt of Timely Addiction Treatment:** [jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/article-abstract/2698965?utm\\_campaign=articlePDF&utm\\_medium=articlePDFlink&utm\\_source=articlePDF&utm\\_content=jamapediatrics.2018.2143](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/article-abstract/2698965?utm_campaign=articlePDF&utm_medium=articlePDFlink&utm_source=articlePDF&utm_content=jamapediatrics.2018.2143)
7. **NIH Effective Treatment for Opioid Addiction:** [archives.nida.nih.gov/publications/effective-treatments-opioid-addiction](https://archives.nida.nih.gov/publications/effective-treatments-opioid-addiction)